

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior listings and versions of the claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Withdrawn) A method for producing a fibrous nonwoven, said method comprising depositing at least one short fiber-including layer by an airlaid process, wherein at least a fraction of the short fibers is provided with a finish in an amount of more than 0.035 percent by weight, based on the fiber weight of the short fibers provided with said finish.

2. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 1, wherein the layer comprises short fibers in an amount of 70 to 99 percent by weight and binder material in an amount of 1 to 30 percent by weight, based on the total weight of short fibers and binder material.

3. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 2, wherein the binder material comprises short binder fibers.

4. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 3, wherein the short binder fibers are multi-component fibers.

5. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein the short binder fibers are bi-component fibers comprising a polyester core and a polyethylene sheath.

6. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 5, wherein the short binder fibers have a length-to weight ratio of 1.0 to 6.0 dtex.

7. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 6, wherein the short fibers have a moisture in the range of from 4 to 16%.

8. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 7 wherein the short fibers comprise short cellulose fibers, short cotton fibers, cellulosic man-made fibers, short synthetic fibers or a combination thereof.

9. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 8, wherein the short fibers comprise short viscose fibers and at least a fraction of the short viscose fibers is provided with the finish.

10. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 9, wherein at least a fraction of the short viscose fibers has a multi-limbed cross-section.

11. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 10, wherein the multi-limbed cross-section is a three-limbed cross-section.

12. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 9, wherein the short fibers comprise the viscose fibers in an amount of more than 85 percent by weight, based on the total weigh of the short fibers.

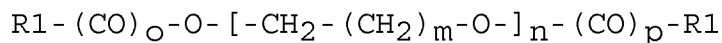
13. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 12, wherein the short fibers have a length in the range of from 4 to 8 mm.

14. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 13, wherein the short fibers have a length-to-weight ratio of 1.0 to 6.0 dtex.

15. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 14, wherein the layer further comprises superabsorbent material.

16. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 15, wherein the finish is selected from

(a) ester derivatives and ether derivatives of polyethylene oxide and polypropylene oxide of the general formula:



wherein R1 is, in each case independently of each other, a saturated or unsaturated hydrocarbon moiety having 12 to 22 carbon atoms, particularly 14 to 20 carbon atoms, which moiety may contain one or more free hydroxyl groups, o and p are independently of each other 0 or 1, m is 0 or 1, and n is 1 to 15, preferably 3 to 11, particularly 4 to 7,

(b) mono-, di- and triesters of sorbitanes with fatty acids of the formula R1-COOH, wherein R1 is, in each case independently of each other, as defined above,

(c) mono-, di-, and triglycerides of fatty acids of the formula R1-COOH, wherein R1 is, in each case independently of each other, as defined above,

(d) imidazolinium ethosulfates and methosulfates

(e) ethoxylated and propoxylated derivatives of the compounds according to (a), (b), (c) and (d), and

(f) mixtures of compounds according to (a), (b), (c), (d) or/and (e).

17. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 16, wherein the at least one short fiber-including layer is deposited on a fibrous sheet.

18. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 17, wherein the fibrous sheet is a short fiber-including layer which has been deposited by an airlaid process.

19. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 18, comprising depositing two or three short fiber-including layers.

20. (Currently Amended) A fibrous nonwoven comprising at least one short fiber-including layer, the layer comprising short viscose fibers having a multi-limbed cross-section, wherein at least a fraction of the short fibers is provided with a finish in an amount of more than 0.035 percent by weight, based on the fiber weight of the short fibers provided with the finish, wherein the finish is selected from the group consisting of imidazolium ethosulfates, methosulfates, and the ethoxylated and propoxylated derivatives of imidazolium ethosulfates and methosulfates, wherein the short fibers have a moisture content in the range of from 4 to 16%.

21. (Original) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 20, wherein the layer comprises short fibers in an amount of 70 to 99 percent by weight and binder material in an amount of 1 to 30 percent by weight, based on the total weight of short fibers and binder material.

22. (Original) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 21, wherein the binder material comprises short binder fibers.

23. (Original) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 22, wherein the short binder fibers are multi-component fibers.

24. (Original) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 23, wherein the short binder fibers are two-component fibers comprising a polyester core and a polyethylene sheath.

25. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 24, wherein the short binder fibers have a length-to-weight ratio of 1.0 to 6.0 dtex.

26. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 25, wherein the layer further comprises the short fibers comprising short cellulose fibers, short cotton fibers, cellulosic man-made fibers, short synthetic fibers or a combination thereof.

27. (Canceled).

28. (Canceled).

29. (Presently Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 20, wherein the multi-limbed cross-section is a three-limbed cross-section.

30. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 29, wherein the short fibers comprise the viscose fibers in an amount of more than 85 percent by weight, based on the total weight of the short fibers.

31. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 30, wherein the short fibers have a length in the range of from 4-8 mm.

32. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 31, wherein the short fibers have a length-to-weight ratio of 1.0 to 6.0 dtex.

33. (Previously Presented) The fibrous nonwoven according to claim 32, where in the layer further comprises superabsorbent material.

34. (Canceled).

35. (Previously Presented) A multi-layer fibrous nonwoven, comprising at least one layer of a fibrous nonwoven according to claim 20.

36. (Currently Amended) A short fiber provided with a finish in an amount of more than 0.035 percent by weight, based on the fiber weight, wherein the finish is selected from the group consisting of imidazolium ethosulfates, methosulfates, and the ethoxylated and propoxylated derivatives of imidazolium ethosulfates and methosulfates, and wherein the short fiber has a multi-limbed cross-section and a moisture content in the range of from 4 to 16%.

37. (Original) The short fiber according to claim 36, wherein the short fiber is a viscose fiber.

38. (Canceled).

39. (Currently Amended) The short fiber according to claim ~~38~~36, wherein the length-to weight ratio is 1.0 to 6.0 dtex.

40. (Canceled).

41. (Previously Presented) Use of the short fiber according to claim 36 in an airlaid process to form a fibrous nonwoven.

42. (Previously Presented) An absorbent article, comprising a fibrous nonwoven according to claim 41, having an absorbent capacity of at least 3 g/g fibrous nonwoven.

43. (Original) The absorbent article according to claim 42, wherein the article is a hygienic article.

44. (Original) The absorbent article according to claim 43, wherein the hygienic article is a tampon, a sanitary napkin, a diaper or an incontinence article.

45. (Original) The absorbent article according to claim 42, wherein the article is a household article, an industrial article or a medical article.